



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

EPDIS file
13456~~SECRET/EPDIS~~

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Secretary

THROUGH: S/S

FROM: NEA - Joseph J. Sisco

SUBJECT: TWA Hijacking: Status Report - INFORMATION
MEMORANDUM

SEP 5 1969

9/5/69

1. Over the last few days we have continued our intensive efforts to secure the release of the two Israelis held by the Syrians in Damascus. These efforts have resulted in the following developments:

a. The ICAO Committee for Unlawful Interference in International Aviation yesterday dispatched a message to the Syrian Government requesting further information and implicitly seeking Syrian agreement to the release of the two Israeli passengers.

b. The NATO Advisory Committee met yesterday to discuss what measures NATO members might take and has urged that everything possible be done.

c. Through our United States Mission in Geneva we have contacted the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) to determine what if anything that organization--which presently has two representatives in Damascus--can do.

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GROUP 3

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June 22, 2004

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d. Since one of the Israeli passengers being held was returning from a World Health Organization meeting and is working on a WHO project, we have sought WHO intervention, bearing in mind that WHO has been active in Syria.

e. We have continued to be in close touch with TWA, which informs us that TWA President Wiser has obtained the impression after his visit to Damascus a couple of days ago that the Syrian Government intends to hold the Israeli passengers as a trade-off for two Syrian pilots held by the Israelis.

f. We have continued to urge the Israelis to exercise restraint and to allow time for our current efforts to be played out.

g. We have followed up our earlier demarche with the Soviets, who passed along to us yesterday a Syrian message apropos our representations to the effect that the "question" is "not closed".

h. We continue to be in touch with the Italians in Rome, who tell us that they have instructed their Charge to call on the Syrian Foreign Minister, who has just returned to Damascus from the Arab Foreign Ministers' Conference.

2. Although we are running out of meaningful, practical steps which might be taken, we are contemplating certain additional actions. The Israelis have expressed deep appreciation for what we have done and have expressed an understanding regarding the limits under which we are operating. Nevertheless, they are rapidly losing patience over the continued detention of two of their nationals. We continue to believe that the principal focus should be quiet initiatives undertaken mainly by the Italians and by the Soviets.

3. Following are additional measures which we are launching today:

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a. We are instructing Ambassador Yost in New York to ask U Thant to do everything possible to assist in efforts to release the passengers.

b. We are approaching governments whose airlines land in Syria or who offer landing rights to the Syrian airlines informing them that we are considering proposing that they initiate a boycott. We are inviting their views regarding this course of action, noting at the same time that we wish to avoid any pressures which might be counterproductive.

c. On a highly confidential and closely-held basis we are today proposing to the Israelis that they give consideration to releasing quietly in Italy the two Syrian MIG pilots which they hold. We are proposing this course of action because: (1) it offers the best hope of securing the release of the Israeli passengers; (2) it gets around the Israeli objection to making an overt trade for the two Israeli passengers being held by the Syrians; and (3) it offers the Syrian pilots a freedom of choice as to whether they wish to return to Syria at this juncture or not.

d. We are today following up with those governments whom we earlier requested to intercede with the Syrians and have not reported back.

4. We have the following three additional actions up our sleeve:

a. The first is to urge the governments who have been invited to send representatives to the inauguration of the new Damascus International Airport later this month to refrain from doing so in protest against the Syrian action. We are withholding this action pending the obtention of further information concerning this inauguration ceremony.

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b. The second contingency action is to go to the Security Council. At this juncture we oppose such a measure as being counterproductive.

c. Another possibility is an attempt to block Syria's candidacy for a seat on the Security Council. We could argue that Syria has not demonstrated that it is a responsible member of the international community and therefore should not have the seat.

5. Incidentally, it should be kept in mind that one of the Israelis held by the Syrians, Saleh Moualem, occupation unknown, has served in the Israeli Intelligence Service. This is being closely held but relates to what we are doing.

The second, Prof. Shlomo Samueloff, Lecturer in medicine, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, has no other connection to our knowledge. You may be aware that you have received numerous telegrams on his behalf from American Jewish organizations and individuals in academic circles.

cc: The Under Secretary
J - Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson

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Clearances:
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